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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes what is meant by basic education. The author presents six principal usages of the term that are based on the kinds of education offered and their purposes rather than on whether they take place in or out of school. Examples of the six usages are given. Variations in terminology are generally more than purely semantic or technical. Each expression is usually associated with a particular type of effort or educational stance, based (overtly or inadvertently) on certain social, economic, and political as well as educational concepts. Basic education also has civic and developmental meanings. Basic education in its civic sense can be said to be that form of education that in any given country can meet at least minimum learning needs and can also be made universal. Developmental meanings of basic education overlap with civic meanings, but place more emphasis on its contribution to vocational needs and personal development linked with daily activities. (Author/IRT)

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IIEP seminar paper: (19)

WHAT IS MEANT BY BASIC EDUCATION?

H. M. Phillips

A contribution to the IIEP Seminar on "The planning problems in rural education"
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The task assigned to this paper is to analyse what is meant by basic education, so as to assist in the study of planning problems dealt with in the other seminar papers.

2. The word basic has two meanings (i) the bottom part of a structure which is adequate to support the parts above it; and (ii) something that exists in a form adequate to meet functional needs. Applied to education the definition is complicated by the fact that the term "basic education" has little currency in standard classifications of levels of education. It is rather an attribute of other forms of education, and contains within it the query basis to what? or functional to what needs? It does not exist in the International Standard Classification of Education, nor is it in standard use in educational libraries and documentary units and statistical publications.(1) At the same time it is a term which is now coming into ever increasing use by educators and statesmen. It appears, for instance, in Section 105 of the United States Foreign Assistance Act.

II. SIX PRINCIPAL USAGES

3. In its first principal usage basic education denotes the king of elementary education which it is necessary and possible to universalize in any particular country for civic and political reasons, and in order to fulfill, in at least a minimum way, the human right to education. It covers elementary school education (the first 3 to 5 years of the primary

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(1) In some documentary units it is represented by titles dealing only with out of school education. However, it is quite usual in the literature (e.g. in the Report of the International Commission on the Development of Education - the Faure Report) for the term to cover education both in and out of school. The World Bank in 'Education - Section Working Paper' December 1974 (page 29) speaks of the primary cycle being the principal vehicle of basic education in many countries, distinguishing it from conventional universal primary education in that its objectives and contents are defined in terms of minimum learning needs of identified groups and not as steps in the educational hierarchy; that it deals with adults and youth as well as children; and that it operates through out of school education as well as through the school system.

cycle)[1], and out of school programmes at the same levels for youth and adults who missed elementary education as children.

4. A second principal usage similar to the first but with a different nuance is to denote at least minimum mass education (in school and out of school) as part of a development strategy based on full utilization of human resources; civic and human rights objectives being included in the concept of development[2].

5. The third principal usage, closely allied to the first two, derives from the educational process looked at from the standpoint of the learner. Basic education is any organized means of meeting 'minimum learning needs.' This approach is the one adopted in the ICED studies on non-formal education, though it is also applicable to formal education. In New Paths to Learning it is stated[3]:

> "To size up the educational requirements of children and youth in any rural area and to plan provisions for meeting them, one must first have a clear and realistic conception of their minimum essential learning needs. Hence the starting question is: What educational needs should be fulfilled by one means or another for all boys and girls before they assume the full responsibilities of adulthood? Without a clear and detailed answer to this question, the assertion that every child has a 'right' to an education has little practical meaning. The 'right' must be translated into terms of some 'minimum package' of attitude, skills and knowledge that every young person in a given society will require for an effective and satisfying adulthood. Many young people will hopefully achieve more than this minimum, but any society guided by democratic ideals must give a high priority to securing at least this minimum for all. To do otherwise is to create a privileged elite at the sacrifice of everyone else."

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1. The Unesco-sponsored study of retention of literacy in India by J.M. Kapoor and Prodipto Roy made in 1971 (ED/WS/Z19) found 4 years of primary school or its adult education equivalent "as an absolute minimum foundation for continued command of literacy skills," but recommended 5 years for retention 6 to 8 years later. It also found that adults made literate lost their literacy quicker than children except when they had "favourable attitudes." On the other hand the Asian Republic of the USSR use a 3 year elementary cycle and Nepal has followed this example. The extent of pre-primary education in the USSR as well as its wealth of pedagogic research, will be part of the reason, whild in Nepal the Buddhic tradition may contribute.
2. (cont'd) See Education Sector Working Paper. World Bank 1974 (p.29). 'basic education is an attempt, despite severe resource constraints, to meet the needs of substantial portions of the population who do not have access to even minimum educational opportunities' and 'some form of mass education is a necessary part of any development strategy based on full and more productive utilization of human resources.' (p.28)
3. (cont'd) Philip Coombs, R.C. Prosser, and M. Ahmad. Study sponsored by Unicef and prepared and published by the ICED 1973.

6. This may be called the 'minimum package" approach and it applies to other basic services which raise living levels. The Executive Director of Unicef in his General Progress Report[1] states :

In my opinion, what is most needed at this stage is to help countries establish a 'package' of basic services in the interrelated fields of food and nutrition, clean water, health measures, family planning, basic education and supporting services for women. This 'package' should be put together in different ways to suit the needs and the administrative structure of each particular country.

7. This conception is obtaining a wide usage and has appeal because of its flexibility, and its possibility of relating education better to the needs of life and work? For educators, it has to be seen in the longer term - since minimum packages get out of date - as part of life long education[2], though this is a distant view for the majority of the populations of low-income countries.

8. In order to be activated, however, on a large scale, the basic package concept has to be transmitted into institutions. Like the concept of life long education, it will only become an actual educational reality when institutions have caught up with it. The Japanese National Educational Research Institute made this point in regard to life long education in their comments on the Report of the International Commission for the Development of Education[3]. Interesting work is developing in the Unesco/Unicef programmes as regards methodologies to identify 'life skill objectives[4] and minimum learning needs, but less progress has been made on the institutional side.

9. In a fourth principal usage basic education denotes the kind of initial education which is necessary for continuing education and equates with the whole of first level education without the concept of a minimum necessarily being present. It may be called the tools of learning approach.

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1. E/ICEF/637 (Part I) 29 April, 1975.
2. See the Report Basic Education in Eastern Africa of a seminar held in 1974 under the Unesco/Unicef Cooperative Programme (page 23). "It was also agreed that basic education should be seen as one stage, an initial stage, of the process of life long education...".
3. "Unless there is a precise plan defining the relationships and responsibilities of the different educational establishments in a system of life-long education there is a danger that it may never be more than an abstract idea." (ED/BIE/CONFINTED 34/4 Add.,p.4).

This usage appears in the classifications approved by the Unesco General Conference as to the International Standardization of Educational Statistics in 1958 (p.8). "Education at the first level of which the main function is to provide basic instruction in the tools of learning (e.g. at elementary school, primary school)." This meaning of basic education is tending to disappear since many authorities refer to this kind of education as standard primary education to which basic education is an alternative, and to be replaced by the concept of the basic cycle of study.

10. In a fifth principal usage it means education for youth and adults who already have had a primary education or been through literacy programmes, but need some further courses to prepare them for work, or apprenticeship, or training in basic skills in agriculture, commerce, or industry, or participation in particular development programmes. This usage has its origin in primarily developmental rather than civic needs, though it is often used as an extension of the first three usages. Many out of school projects of this kind are analysed in "Attacking Rural Poverty"[1] and "New Paths to Learning".

11. The sixth principal usage, often referred to as the basic cycle of studies[3], relates to one which is already evolving in the more educationally advanced countries, and exists already in a few, of a flexible basic cycle of studies cutting across orthodox distinctions as to levels and streams, and geared ultimately to life-long education. In view of the prospects of a number of developing countries of doubling their income in the next fifteen

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1. Philip Coombs with Manzoor Ahmed. A World Bank publication. The John Hopkins University Press 1974.
2. Op.cit., See also the International Standard Classification of Education (ED/BIE/CONFINTED. 35/Ref.8, p.29). " The ability merely to read and write is a requirement for admission to almost all programmes of adult or out of school education except literacy programmes."
3. (cont'd) An analysis of this concept is contained in the Report (p.2) of the Meeting of Experts on the Basic Cycle of Study held at Unesco in June 1974 (ED-74/CONF.622/5). It attributes the evolution of this concept to: "The demand for a more democratic provision of education", and: "The explosion of knowledge which has led to demands for a longer period of schooling to equip people better for life in a more technological world." It states that as a result of these demands: "It began to be recognised that education should be a continuous process. At this point the concept of primary or elementary education gave way to the notion of a basic cycle of education of flexible duration intended to provide enrichment for life in the perspective of life long education"... "It obviously entails much more than adding a few years of schooling to primary education."

to twenty years, this concept suitably scaled down, can usefully be ventillated in their longer term prospective planning.[1]

12. The concept of the basic cycle of studies is also seen by its proponents as an approach to extending education to those at present deprived of it, since it is not tied to education of any predefined content or number or years.

13. The concept of 'scaling down' has to be handled prudently since it is no easy process. Considerable research and experimentation are required on how to secure the same or better output in a shorter time. This is illustrated in the work undertaken in the Soviet Union before the introduction of the three instead of the four year elementary cycle.[2]

14. It will be seen from the foregoing that for the purposes of its use in educational planning the term basic education is afflitected with a lack of statistical and documentary support, a high degree of relativity in its more educational meaning, and different political and developmental undertones. At the same time, in its first three meanings at least, it describes the world's largest single unmet educational need.

15. A suggestion might be that for the six principal usages the following terms should be applied. For the first three: 'minimum basic education'; for the fourth: 'basic first level education' : for the fifth: 'pre-employment basic education', or 'basic education for working life'; for the sixth :'the cycle (or 'full cycle') of basic education'. There are certain overlaps between all of the meanings.

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1. (cont'd) Mr. René Ochs, representing the Director General of Unesco stated at the Seminar on Basic Education in Eastern Africa (op.cit.), that an important conclusion of the Expert Meeting on the Basic Cycle of Study was: "that the basic cycle of education should rely not only on school teaching but also on the full utilization of the various education resources of the community, would it be to supplement school, or to extend education to children and youth and adults who did not benefit from school attendance or adequate schooling."
2. Publications of the USSR Academy of Pedagogic Science. See Unesco Cooperative Educational Abstracting Service. Abstract No. 6-67/E September 1968, and particularly Razbities Ucascibja v Process Obucenija, L.V. Zankow, on problems of the speed and difficulty of learning in first three grades of elementary education. See also a later account of Zankow's work and a comparison of it with that of J.S. Brunner in 'Modernization of Education,Teaching Media,and Technology.' Prague 1973.The report of a Unesco sponsored meeting (p.29). Paper by Prof.Mirozlav Cipro.

16. Clarification of the different usages is valuable since confusion results from different experts giving different advice in similar conditions without the underlying concepts being clear.[1] Some are recommending shorter more efficient cycles to hasten the universalization of primary education; others are recommending longer cycles to improve the educational output of those catered for by the existing system; still others are thinking in terms of the merging of different educational streams into a 9 or 10 year basic cycle, linked to the concept of life-long education; some are concerned primarily with out of school education. Some are urging ruralized education. Others believe that the extent of ruralization must be small in order to conserve opportunity of movement throughout the national system.

17. Some examples of basic education under the different meanings might be:

(1) Covering both the first and second meanings: the elementary stage of education which lasts three years in the USSR has the task "to teach the child to read, write and do sums, to provide an introduction to nature study and the social sciences, as well as to aesthetic, vocational and physical training, to develop the child's power of reasoning and self-sufficiency. The subjects studied in the elementary school are: native language, mathematics, nature study, shop (meaning arts and crafts, laying out and sowing vegetable beds in school gardens, the uses of electricity, etc.), music and physical training."[2] Nepal also has a three year elementary course. It covers literacy, arithmetic, social studies, social studies, physical education, hygiene, handicrafts, and drawing.[3]

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1. Of interest in this connection are the results of the UNRISD Survey (p. 152) of assistance projects, 'Inducing Social Change" which showed that in the views of both foreign and national experts by far the greatest number of major mistakes are due not no technical reasons, or to misjudging local psychology but to mistakes in planning or conception.
2. See Education in the USSR, Progress Publishers Moscow (p. 39).
3. See National Education System Plan for 1971-76, Ministry of Education, Nepal 1971.

(2) As regards the third meaning: the programme for young people 15-45 in nonformal education in India consists of information and knowledge about the living environment and the development process in the country; basic knowledge fur understanding various social economic scientific and technological changes; elementary principles of health, hygiene, child care, and nutrition; basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic; introductory occupational/vocational skill programmes.[1]

(3) Under the fourth meaning would fall the first level curricula of countries with a full 6 or 7 year primary cycle.[2]

(4) An example of the fifth meaning would be the Kenyan Village Polytechnics.

(5) An example of the sixth meaning would be the latest developments in and plans for the Swedish education system, some nitial experiments in other countries, and some other longer term plans, as in Peru. This meaning concentrates less on content and more on creating individual and social aptitudes. It is not limited to any prescribed number of years, and cannot easily be illustrated by examples, being more of a policy specific than a particular type of education.

III. OTHER PRINCIPAL DISTINCTIONS, MEANINGS AND USAGES

18. It will have been noticed that the foregoing six categories are divided according to kinds of education and their purposes, and not on whether they take place in or out of school. All forms of organised education are included, except what the International Classification of Education calls 'random learning', or what in the terminology in general use and that adopted in the ICED studies is called 'informal education". Random learning or informal education takes place in a hapazard way through communication and the transmission of knowledge and behavioural patterns through unorganized contacts with parents and peers, self education etc., and, though important, falls outside of the process of educational planning as normally practised.

19. In basing out six categories on the kind and level of organised education, rather than how it is organised, we follow the approach adopted by ISCED and reaffirmed at the Inter Governmental meeting of experts held at Unesco in

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1. See Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. Main schemes for non-formal education in the Fifth Five Year Plan New Delhi 1974.
2. See statement by Mr. René Ochs (op.cit., p. 61) regarding the conclusions of the Expert Meeting on the Basic Cycle of Study: "the basic cycle of studies cannot be defined in relation to a certain volume of educational content or to a certain duration of schooling."

December 1974. This is the necessary first step since for planning purposes it is essential to define the different kinds of output to be aimed at. However, for planning purposes it is also necessary to distinguish different forms of educational organization since they determine the inputs. Here we enter an area of considerable semantic controversy, since the recommendations of the ISCED expert meeting as to the uses of the terms 'formal' and 'non formal', run counter to that adopted by other authorities over recent years. The controversy goes much beyond pure semantics in its implications, since it affects the way data and statistics are recorded for educational planning and evaluation, and the way in which the development of educational institutions is visualized.

20. Many authorities have used the term 'non formal' education to denote education which takes place outside of the school system. This term is used in the Faure Report (as is the term basic education) and also in the ICED studies. Non-formal education is defined in those studies as

'Non formal education as used here is any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups in the population, adults as well as children. Thus defined, non formal education includes, for example, agricultural extension and farmer training programs, adult literacy programs, occupational skill training given outside the formal system, youth clubs with substantial educational purposes, and various community programs of instruction in health, nutrition, family planning, cooperatives, and the like.'

21. In the Report of the Sixth Commonwealth Education Conference 1974 it is stated (p.11):

'In this 'Report' 'formal' education refers to learning experiences that are structured and provided in an institutional setting at pre-determined steps of an individual's life, while 'non-formal' education refers to learning experiences which, though also structured, are usually entered into voluntarily and are provided in settings other than those devoted exclusively to teaching and learning.'

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1. Attacking Rural Poverty: How non formal education can help. Philip Coombs with Manzoor Ahmed. A World Bank Publication. The John Hopkins University Press 1974 (p. 8).

22. However, the ISCED expert meeting recommended the term 'out of school'[1] to refer to the type of education described in the two preceding quotations on the ground that once it is organised and enrolment takes place it becomes formal. This is how official data and statistics will henceforth be collected if these recommendations are approved next year by the Unesco General Conference.

23. In ISCED the definitions are as follows: 'formal' education is education in which students are enrolled or registered regardless of the mode of teaching used (i.e. it includes an educational series transmitted by the mass media if the students are registered). 'Non-formal' education is education in which students are not enrolled or registered, and do not have sustained instruction Visits to individual farms by agricultural extension workers and 'animation rurale' not being organised and sustained and not requiring enrolment, appear in ISCED as non-formal education.[2] The ISCED defines first level education as primary education of about 5 or 6 years, literacy programmes for adults who missed earlier schooling, and 'programmes with a vocational emphasis for beginners or for those who have completed primary education.'

24. The reason given for the classification in ISCED by levels and types of education, and not by whether education is organised in or out of school, is that this fits in with the growing interest in life long or recurrent education that would make use on an intermittent basis of both of these forms of educational organization.

25. This aspect of ISCED is likely to claim war support when the recommendations come before the Unesco General Conference. However, difficulties may be foreseen as regards the restriction of the term non-formal to cases where the learners are not enrolled and the education is not sustained, as it conflicts with the use already established in the literature and will cause confusion.

26. ISCED renders a valuable service in distinguishing between education and learning experience, since difficulties have arisen from the practice much followed in recent years of using the word 'learning' to replace the whole of the meaning of the word 'education', whereas in fact it can only replace part of it. For educational planning the word learning refers to an objective or result of planning and not the thing which is to be planned.

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1. 'Out of school system' would be strictly better though clumsy, since the education in question may take place in school buildings. See International Standard Classification of Education Abridged Edition Unesco, ED/BIE/CONFINTED/35/Ref.8.
2. See Unesco CON/MD/32, p. 10.

The thing which has to be planned is a set of educational institutions and programmes for learning purposes. In the case of minimum learning needs, for instance, it is not the needs that are planned but the ways and means of defining and meeting them.

27. Another difficulty is that standard international educational statistics and terminology are not well geared to the special needs of countries countries with incomplete educational systems, a matter discussed later in our Section VI on terminology and realities. The words 'out of school education' have a usage associated with conditions where a complete coverage of the school population already exists (though this is not the strict sense on the term).[1] The term 'non formal' education, however, has come recently into prominent usage to cover supplements and alternatives to the school systems of countries with incomplete coverage of their school age population.

28. Variations of terminology are generally more than purely semantic or technical. Each expression is usually associated with a particular type of effort or educational stance, based (overtly or inadvertently) on certain social, economic, and political as well as educational concepts, some of which have appeared on the scene for brief interludes, and others for long periods though often in different guises.

29. Thus, the term 'fundamental education' is associated with the community development effort of the fifties, now under a cloud. 'Pre-employment education' is part of an effort, acquiring new prominence in the seventies, to bridge the gap between employment opportunities and lack of elementary basic education. It is also connected with urban rural migration and the hope to absorb redundant rural labour into wage earning employment.

30. 'Elementary' education links with ambitions to universalize education as a human right as soon as possible for civic reasons. 'First level' like 'first cycle' education is extender elementary education seen from the optic of the whold educational system and of educational planning. The term 'basic/basic first cycle' education recently introduced is an attempt to combine the nuances of 'elementary' and 'first level' or first cycle and reacts to the recommendation of the International commission on the Development of Education (The Faure Report) that 'universal basic education,

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1. See Unesco 94 EX/12 (p. 4) under the heading marked 'definition'. Liveright and Haygood are quoted as writing: Adult education is a process whereby persons who no longer attend schools... (our underlining).

in a variety of forms depending on possibilities and needs should be the top priority in the 1970's' (p. 192).

31. Other varieties of basic education are education in 'community schools', combining children and adults, and compensatory, or recuperative, education, for adults and youth who missed elementary education, varieties of which are called in Latin America 'parallel' education.

32. Most out of school education, however, presupposes that the pupil possesses a basic education in the sense of completion of elementary primary education, or at least the acquisition of literacy. This applies to most of the 'non-formal' education projects described in the ICED studies. Adult education programmes other than literacy classes are usually frequented by people who have elementary education and want to broaden their knowledge or occupational opportunities.

33. Minimum elementary learning needs in most areas will mean literacy and numeracy and the necessary ability to cope with an environment in which some forms of modernization already exist. But there are also areas when adjustments of tribal initiation and traditional types of instruction could adequately meet local learning needs.

34. The notion of minimum learning needs raises not only questions of content but also, as we saw abode with reference to USSR experience, important issues of method and technology of teaching learning, so as to reduce a course to a minimum of time while preserving or improving the necessary output. A method and curriculum is required that can be mastered in a economic way, in order to be absorved by the greatest number of people. The best known is the 'mastery learning' approach associated with the work of Bloom and Carroll and their associates, based on the thesis that the instructional task is to define what is meant by mastery of a subject and to discover methods and materials to help the largest proportion of students reach it. This contrasts with traditional procedures of aiming at pupils rapidly grading themselves into categories of attainment and failure.

IV. CIVIC MEANINGS: HUMAN RIGHTS AND UNIVERSAL EDUCATION

35. Because basic 'education' in the first three principal meanings we have set out is the main instrument to carry out the clause in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that education should be free and compulsory, it has a special role in national and international policy.

36. The Director-General of Unesco in his comments on the recommendation of the International Commission on the Development of Education that basic education should be the top priority for the seventies states: 'The Director General notes the relevance of flexible forms of education cited in the Report - for instance part time or appropriate rhythm schooling. He thinks however that particular care must be taken lest these solutions, although their underlying purpose is to bring into education groups that have hitherto been kept out, result in maintaining or accentuating certain geographical or social inequalities.'

37. He also states 'The Director General wishes to observe in passing that this last orientation should provoke Unesco to fresh reflection, insofar as its normative action respecting the right to education, based on the text of the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education (Paris, 14 December 1960), has essentially borne on the traditional school structures - whose monopoly is just what is challenged by this Report.'

38. The Director General further stated 'the need for enlarging access to education leads to a more flexible interpretation of the right to education, a right which often cannot be ensured by the institutional school system alone but requires use of a variety of in and out of school methods.'

39. It is to be noted, however, that the Convention did go beyond the traditional school structure when it stated (our underlining) 'access to education of any type or at any level.' (Article 1). It also states (Article 4c) that States are 'to encourage and intensify by appropriate methods the education of persons who have not received any primary education, or who have not completed the entire primary course.'

40. Relevant to the planning of rural basic education from the human rights angle, is the problem of the degree of local differences of curricula and quality to be aimed at. In this connection the Convention of 1960 states the State's party to the Convention undertake 'to ensure that the standards of education are equivalent in all public educational institutions of the same level, and that the conditions relating to the quality of the education provided are also equivalent,' an injonction it is obviously impossible to carry out in a country of major size, or in the rural areas of the developing countries.

41. Many differences of meaning as well as of practice have arisen on this issue. In the Unesco publication (1974) 'Education in a Rural Environment' we read: '..in the case of education in a rural environment,

any attempt at adaptation runs the risk of creating a system separate from that of the urban environment.' (p. 31), followed by: "In the countryside the prime duty of the school is to give the child a suitable education in a rural context.' (p. 31).

42. The solution is stated to be 'integration', defined as: 'Integration means there must be one type of school integrated with the community and not one school of the traditional type with a 'farm school' alongside. No experiment involving co-existence of two different types of school has been successful, either as regards democratization or as regards development.'

43. By integration is meant a sufficient relation to agriculture and community life to adapt the education given to local conditions without losing the tie in with general education. The Unesco publication states (p. 34): 'Briefly agricultural education should tie in with general education not as an additional subject or even as a common denominator of to a whole set of subjects, but as an element in general education defined as part of a system and of a programme integrated with the community and the environment. In this way, biology, nutrition and home economics might be normally associated with agricultural education as part of general education.' However, the subtlety of the integration approach which gives its appeal to policy makers and its intellectual satisfaction makes it hard to apply in the actual pedagogic and organizational conditions of rural areas.

44. The same conception of rural basic education, but with less emphasis on the degree of rural adaptation to be sought, appears in the Unesco Compendium which states (p. 5): 'However, to ensure the democratic accessibility of education for all, the introduction of rural subjects must not be done at the expense of general subjects, must not upset the curriculum balance, not prevent the graduates from rural primary schools from securing admission to both academic and vocational secondary schools.'

45. Difficulties of determining the degree of adaptation has led a number of authorities to turn to the concept of minimum learning needs, which is highly localised and might as a pragmatic matter, if it has local support, provide a better solution than a full policy of integration in very poor rural areas. Such a solution might have to be limited to the composition of the curriculum, since the minimum learning needs concept is unlikely to have a future unless it is combined with links to the full system with compensatory cycles.

46. While as a long term objective the same amount of education should be offered to each member of the population, there are clear differences between different areas in minimum learning needs just as there are between countries. These involve quality as well as content of education. The extreme case is to compare, for instance, the needs of indigenous children living in a tribal state with those in urban centres.

47. Many attempts have been made in Africa and elsewhere to offer heavily ruralized forms of school education which have failed because the local population regarded them as second best, and as we saw above, the Convention against Discrimination is on their side. The French speaking African countries have had a good deal of experience of such efforts undertaken under cooperation programmes with France.[1]

48. These setbacks do not mean that it is impossible to develop support at the local level for forms of utility education different from nationwide standards, proviced the local population consider that they are advantageous and that they provide opportunities.[2] Nor do they preclude the successful introduction of a modicum of practical instruction oriented to agricultural problems. Examples of this exist in Asia (e.g. Thailand, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India) and in Latin America (e.g. Columbia and Peru).

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1. For an account of these, see the Paper prepared by Madame Bonnaud for the Bellagio Conference on Education and Development 1973, and information papers by the French delegation submitted to the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD. See also 'Economie et Education en milieu rural' by André Guizet, Secrétariat d'Etat aux Affaires Etrangères, Direction de l'Aide au Développement 1974, which includes an account of new orientations being adopted.
2. See Education, Society and Development - New Prospectives from Kenya, Oxford University Press, Nairobi 1974, David Court and Dharam Ghai, an analysis of pupils' felt needs for schooling which indicates: 'Students view schooling as a means of obtaining a steady income to satisfy obligations to their families and invest for their future in the local community. Although they perceive that their chances of obtaining an aided Form I place or wage employment are slight, they persist because few viable alternatives are open to them. Yet if alternatives for academic education were available which were tailored to meet the needs of the community and the entrepreneurial constraints facing youngsters, both students and parents would seem ready to turn their efforts in that direction.' (Our underlining). See also DAC(72)47, an account by the French cooperation authorities of the Mandoul Valley project in the Republic of Chad.

49. Because of the existence of, and the need for, small one teacher schools in scattered villages, integration means a form of school organization based on inter-connecting district complexes of schools of different levels, as recommended in the Report of the Indian Education Commission and by J.P. Naik in 'Educational Planning in a District'.[2] While important pedagogic problems are present, especially the scaling down of learning time and the use of new methods, a great deal of the challenge is of a purely organizational nature.

50. An alternative to 'integration' is the concept of parallel types and streams of education, intercommunications by a system of ladders and bridges. Parallel education is provided for in a number of countries (e.g. Cuba) under that name. The Peruvian reform sets up 'work' and 'academic' streams side by side between which there is to be fluid movement. Whether this is to be called parallel or integrated education depends on the fluidity of the movement actually achieved.

51. It is possible that at the pedagogical level too much attention has been given to how much difference of content there should be between rural and urban basic education. An equally important issue is how to scale down the best curricula used in richer areas to become for poorer areas - though not the poorest to which the minimum learning needs approach may be best - what are still good curricula.[2]

52. Basic education in its civic sense can be said pedagogically to be that form of education which in any given country can meet at least minimum learning needs and can also be made universal. So far as concerns school age children, it means the viable amount and type of education per pupil which can be made compulsory and free. The concept of viability has to be introduced because there is a limit below which the time required for children's education cannot be compressed.

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1. See paras 2.50 and 10.39 of the Report of the Indian Education Commission and 'Educational Planning in a District", J.P. Naik issued by the Asian Institute of Educational Planning and Administration New Delhi.
2. See Arnold Anderson in The World Yearbook of Education 1974 (p. 45): 'It is fortunate, though not accidental that the best curriculum in basic education is much the same whether for rural or urban living, for farming or virtually any other non routine occupation'. See too the research in the USSR already cited.

53. At the adult level it means education outside the school system for whatever proportion of adults can be set as a feasible target in the particular country, e.g. up to 45 years of age. The adult case is different in that while the human right can be kept open for all adults on a voluntary basis, compulsory education for older people is not usually feasible or desired by the people themselves.

54. The ceiling of this amount and type of education is imposed by a country's resources and its government's degree of commitment to an egalitarian policy. The floor is imposed by the time it takes to meet minimum learning needs in the country concerned, having regard to its state of educational technology and social conditions. This tends to vary from three to five years. The teaching of literacy, for instance, is not viable unless a minimum specific time is devoted to its acquisition and retention.

55. The amount and kind of education required to bring up to floor level those who are at present below it is the deficit which has to be identified for resource allocation to achieve universal basic education.

56. Under the concept of the basic cycle of studies the problem of providing education for all is treated in a different way. The Report of the Unesco sponsored Meeting of Experts on the Basic Cycle of Study held in 1974 (ED74/Conf.622/5, p. 7) states: 'Whereas in the more developed countries the notion of a basic cycle of education often coincides with that of compulsory schooling or in certain cases may mean a reduction of the duration of primary, plus junior or secondary education, in most of the developing countries, it tends to lengthen the duration of educational provision.'

57. The Report adds: 'It therefore requires policy choices which in all cases demand the best possible deployment of financial and physical resources and which may lead to difficult decisions. The following are some of the questions which arise in this respect. What immediate action can be taken to implement a basic cycle of education for all? If resources cannot permit the full cycle to be made available universally, should it be shortened so that all may benefit to an extent? When there is a shortage of national resources how can the basic cycle be implemented using non-formal and part-time educational facilities? What means should be taken so that the basic cycle of education can help those countries which have a problem of unemployed school-leavers to absorb in their economy the products of education?'

'Therefore, the establishment of a basic cycle of education may well require the setting up of non-formal and part-time education programmes at the same level, or at a higher level both for general education or for pre-vocational and vocational education, and training for those not having received adequate schooling as well as for all groups of men and women suffering from handicaps and disadvantages.'

'The place of the basic cycle of education should therefore be defined within the whold education system, and the complementary components which its existence may require should be identified in its perspective.'

V. DEVELOPMENTAL MEANINGS

58. Developmental meanings of basic education overlap with civic meanings, but place more emphasis upon its contribution to vocational needs and personal development linked with daily activities. Thus Gandhi wrote:[1]

'I am a firm believer in the principle of free and compulsory primary education for India. I also hold that we shall realise this only by teaching the children a useful vocation and utilising it as a means for cultivating their mental, physical and spiritual faculties... We have up to now concentrated on stuffing children's minds with all kinds of information, without ever thinking of stimulating and developint them. Let us now cry a halt and concentrate on educating the child properly through manual work, not as a side activity, but as the prime means of intellectual training.'

59. Commenting on this, Gunnar Myrdal states:

'In his propaganda for basic education, Gandhi showed a surprisingly modern way of thinking. He saw the need for algebra as well as reading and writing; he gave high priority to education in sanitation and health care; in general he viewed education as a means of improving attitudes. Furthermore, in his condemnation of the inherited 'literary' or 'academic' type of schooling, especially at the primary level; in his plea for organising subject matter according to interest and purposes; and in his demand for active participation by the pupils themselves, he was in line with modern theories of 'learning through doing' that were developed by John Dewey and other educators in the United States.'

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1. M.J. Gandhi, Harijan, October 9th 1937. p. 292 and september 18th 1937, p. 261: quoted in Asian Drama, Vol. II, Gunnar Myrdal, p. 1737.

60. Myrdal however concludes:

"But in Gandhi's gospel of basic education there was undoubtedly a bias against intellectualism and, in particular, a downgrading of the importance of literacy. The exclusive attention Gandhi paid to the rural village and his emphasis on traditional culture - which he thought needed strengthening rather than reform - gave his propaganda for basic education an intimation of hostility toward change, mobility, and development.

"The Indian government is committed to make all primary schools basic as rapidly as possible. The goal was recently restated in the following way: "It (the basic school) has an activity-centered curriculum wherein the process of learning is correlated with the physical and social environment of the children. Education is imparted through socially useful productive activities like spinning and weaving, gardening, carpentry, leather work, book craft, domestic crafts, pottery, elementary engineering, etc."

61. Myrdal goes on to point out that what happened in practice was the curricula of the basic schools became expanded to include other studies and "although some schools are specifically classified as basic schools, there is a tendency to be satisfied with an 'orientation' of schools to the pattern of basic schools."

62. The Gandhian concept has therefore been considerably watered down in practice. India's Third Five Year Plan explained the aim as "the adoption of a common syllabus in all basic and non-basic schools and the introduction of simple crafts and activities like social service, community living, and cultural and recreational programmes which do not involve much expenditure or require teachers fully trained in basic education." This is no doubt because it is regarded by many parents as too backward looking and too vernacular.

63. The reason for the decline of fundamental education associated with community development was a different one, namely, the difficulty of institutionalising it. In Cultural Patterns and Technical Change (Unesco 1953) edited by Margaret Mead, it is stated that:

"The task of Fundamental Education is to cover the whole of living. In addition, it is to teach, not only new ways, but the need and the incentive for new ways."

64. It is also said:

"Fundamental education in living deals with a number of issues common to all areas... If the new education is to fill the place of the old, it has to cover all areas of living" and "In many countries new fundamental education is carried on by teams including social workers, graduate nurses, agricultural assistants, home economists, hygienic experts."

The latter assumption proved too optimistic. The rise and decline of the ambitious fundamental education concept is well illustrated by the case of TUFEC (Thai/Unesco Fundamental Education Centre). Initiated in the early 1950's it tried out on a large scale over 8 years the UN/Unesco concepts of community development and fundamental education. As many as 71 teams were trained at the Centre, and short courses given for local districts officials. Nevertheless the Department of National Community Development made no provision to include it in the national plan, and the project ceased in 1961 after a costly international and national effort.

65. The main difficulty was the absence of recognition by the organisers of the pre-conditions necessary for the grafting of fundamental education on to the Thai system of education. The notion that it was possible to alter the system of basic education through a general message from outside was based on an underestimation of the Thai culture. The educational system is interwoven with the administrative, political, and cultural structures, and local motivations of various kind which cannot be changed in such a way.

66. The fundamental education approach was followed in Unesco by the functional work orientated literacy experiment carried out since 1966 and recently evaluated. It substituted for community development the idea of linking literacy to work situations.

67. Both methods were a reaction to the failure of general literacy campaigns. It was recognised that in the case of adult and youth education personal, or civic and ideological, impulsions are required for basic education to be meaningful, as happened in both the USA and the USSR where locally organised effort had successful results. On the other hand the more idealistic conception tried in some countries of mass national campaigns was relatively ineffective.

68. The Unesco/UNDF work-oriented literacy programme was designed to overcome the motivational difficulty by settling up projects in areas where developmeng was already visible and job possibilities existed or were in view. It provided courses on on the average 60 to 75 weeks and

lasting 480 hours with sessions on the average of one and three quarter hours, and verged on vocational training.

69. In its most ambitious forms this form of literacy programme is highly oriented to development and much more resembles the conception of basic education we described above as the basic cycle of studies, which may out across both first and second level rypes of school education. This can be seen from its definition taken from Unesco 16C/5. "Functional literacy," it is stated, "in its simplest terms is oiteracy integrated with specialised training usually of a technical nature.

70. Similarly we find in Unesco 18 6/68:

"Briefly, functional literacy is a complex process of technical advancement, scientific acculturation and social and cultural integration, constituting a global educational operation which contributes to changing and gaining the mastery of the milieu." This is obviously closer to second level technical training in schools and institutes than it is to the kind of minimum basic education which can be extented to the whold of the population as a human right."

71. What was originally intented as a way of reducing illiteracy by the simple process of associating it with work needs and motivations became as indicated above "a complex process". Thus once again, in the case of out os school education as in primary education, there was the trap of over refined projects, and while creating a useful tool for development in particular rural areas of promise, it was not a significant form of basic education capable of resolving the problem of mass ignorance in rural area.

72. This can be seen from the following extract from the Interim Report on the Evaluation of the Experimental World Literacy Programme submitted by the Director-General to the 18th session of the Unesco General Conference in October 1974.

"In December 1972 it was calculated that approximately one participant out of four had reached the terminal stage of the course. Of the 75% enrolled in the first year, some will drop out (or have done so), while others will go on to the last year. Wastage varied according to project, ranging from 37% (Tanzania) to 68% (Sudan); the average rate was lower than 50%."

"The average attendance rates for which figures are available may be considered high, since they vary from 64%(Ethiopia) to 92% (Iran), the average being approximately 80%."

"The percentages of those who took the tests at the end of the first part of the course varied according to project from 5% (Ecuador: arts and crafts sector) to 67 % (Sudan: arts and crafts sector), the average being 41 %. The percentages of those who took the final tests varied from 3% (Ecuador: agricultural sector) to 51 % (Sudan: social sector), the average being 30%."

73. Thus if, as we saw, programmes (in school or out of the school system) which are so cut down in their educational content as to be unacceptable to the local population miss their mark as universalizers of basic education this is also true of those with over-ambitious content.

74. Somehow educational organizers have been unable yet to turn to advantage the support[1] for rural primary education given by development economists, and an increase of critical analysis and research and experimenta-experimentation is clearly required.

VI. TERMINOLOGY AND REALITIES

75. Official educational terminology, systems of classification, and statistics in use, are more suited to describing situations in educationally more developed countries, than in the developing countries. The term 'access to education' for instance implies the existence of educational services to which a door is opened. This concept is hardly applicable to elementary education which according to the Declaration of Human Rights has to be compulsory. Compulsory access is not a very meaningful expression, especially when the facilities do not exist. A more useful terminology, reflecting the real situation in countries with incomplete educational systems, would be to speak of the obligation of governments to provide elementary services which it is compulsory for parents to use, unless there is a good reason.

76. A further anomaly is that Ministries of Education compile statistics only of enrolment and not also of unenrolment. It is as if Ministries of Labour issued employment figures only and left out the unemployed. There are no regular statistics showing the number of children becoming adult

1. See J. Adler in Finance and Development, September 1973, World Bank and IMF Review. "It is clear the considerations of income distribution indicate that rural primary education should receive the highest priority, to be followed by the provision of education and training at the secondary level for the staff of agricultural extension services, and perhaps by non-formal adult education aiming at the rural population. This suggestion runs counter to the preference that in recent years development economists and educational experts have given to secondary education and vocational training." See also the papers of Blaug and Schultz in Education and Development Reconsidered, Praeger 1974.

without having obtained a minimum of elementary education, say four years of school, which would be a pointer to a country's missing capacity to provide universal education.

77. Similarly the concepts of wastage and efficiency are oriented to the form rather than the réality, the official definitions of wastage and drop-out being non-completion of the cycle. Thus children who have had five or six years of schooling and are literate and have completed a basic education are labelled 'drop-outs' in countries where the majority of children do not achieve literacy and basic elementary education,[1] if the cycle is a long one.

78. It is common to see it stated that half of the children "of primary school age" are not in school. This formulation grossly exaggerates the deficit for developing countries since it assumes that all children aged five or six to 14 should be in school, a requirement which has only recently been met in the most developed countries.

VII. A TABLE OF MEANINGS

79. In the table which follows the meanings and types of programme are grouped by purpose and applicability. Universalization is not the only role of basic education, even if this is the meaning which has top priority. As we saw earlier it has several other meanings. What is important is that the purpose and the applicability of each should be defined. The following table sets out very briefly eight main meanings, purposes and applicabilities.

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

80. The different meanings of basic education are in certain cases compatible with each other (e.g. universalizing primary education with a short or long cycle and at the same time setting up youth education and training centres) and in certain cases they are incompatible (e.g. a short primary cycle and at the same time setting up a long one).

81. The choice as between the various approaches and, where they are compatible, the selection of the right "mix" of them, must vary with the differing conditions and policies of different countries.

82. Educational planning has concentrated mostly on the "mix" between the different levels. But some further clarification is desirable of the problems of planning different types of education <u>within the first level or basic cycle of studies</u>.

83. Of the eight types of basic education listed in the table on the basis of purpose and applicability the greatest significance is attached to those forms of education, largely of an utilitarian character, which are required in each country to educate all of its citizens up to at least the minimum standards required for civic and development purposes.

84. The main difficulty of meaning is to marry the concept of 'at least minimum' with two others. First with the concept of the 'basic cycle of studies'. This concept does not include the notion of minimum content or duration; although at the same time it is a flexible notion and claims to accommodate in it the purpose of the universalization of education. Are the two concepts compatible in low income countries?

85. Secondly at least minimum basic education has to imply at least minimum basic educational opportunity, a concept which is relatively unexplored. It would require for instance selecting pupils in rural areas on rural bases of competence, and of providing buffer compensatory cycles to facilitate their progression up the national educational ladders. It would also mean creating substantial outlets of non formal education linked with specific bridges or compensatory cycles to the formal system level.[1]

86. Planning within the first level or basic cycle would be aided by an overhaul of the terminology and statistical clasification in use to make them more suited to the less educationally developed areas.

87. The recommendation of the Faure Report that basic education should be given the top priority for the seventies should be given a more precise significance. A closer definition of what is involved to carry out this recommendation in institutional and resource terms is required. This also applies to the question how to implement the ICED studies and recommendations on non-formal education.

88. The whold subject of basic education can benefit from additional clarification. The exploration of problems of meaning, and conception, is not only a prelude to action, but a constantly recurrent part of action itself.

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1. These aspects are discussed in more detail in "Basic education - A world challenge - Measures and innovations' by H.M. Phillips, John Wiley 1975: see Chapter 8, Planning basic education, and Chapter 10, Opportunity ladders; cycles, and bridges.

Form of Education	Main Purpose	Main Applicability
1. Elementary part of the first cycle (3 to 5 years).	Universalisation of at least a minimum of education for civic and working life, as a human right, and to raise levels of productivity.	Countries with substantial proportions of their child population entering adult life illiterate.
2. General literacy programme for youth and adults.	As 1 above, especially for recuperation of people whose elementary education is inadequate or missing.	Countries as in 1, with in addition substantial illiteracy among youth, and among the adult labour force.
3. Pre-employment centres, youth centres, and other programmes of preparation or recuperation for working and civic life, which include literacy, where missing, and some subjects normally in the curriculum of the latter part of the primary education cycle, or of a pre-vocational nature.	To assist in 1 and 2 above and also to bridge gaps between level of education and work and civic roles.	As 1 and 2 above.
4. Work-oriented functional literacy involving some measure of vocational training.	To assist in 1 to 3 above and in foundation of artisanship and semi-skilled labour force, and better self employment.	To meet or to some measure promote active economic demand.
5. The whole of the primary cycle (5 to 7 years), in some cases incorporating practical rural learning experiences.	To feed both the second level and work demands for first level school leavers.	Countries with universal minimum elementary education already attained, or those giving it lower priority for reasons of development policy.
6. Primary cycle plus a measure of pre-vocational education or apprenticeship.	As 1 above, and for the supply of initial basic skills for agriculture, industry and commerce.	As 4 above.
7. Various other types of out of school educational or learning programmes presupposing primary education.	Vocational education for employment.	As 4 above.
8. Basic cycle of study cutting across first and second level (9 to 10 years).	Response to demand for democratisation, greater flexibility and technological progress, and laying basis for life long education. Concentration on creating aptitudes rather than on duration or minimum content.	Countries with complete primary enrolment and considerable technological progress; or countries as in 1 above able to devise and adopt cut-down or adapted versions which are viable.